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ABSTRACT

This paper compares the changing role of local government in developing countries' education systems. Using case studies, it examines the role of local government in Zimbabwe, Chile, India, and Tanzania, thus offering a representative range of low- and middle-income countries. Each of the countries attempted to use local government as a source of additional revenue for schooling and as a mechanism for introducing greater equality and democracy into the schooling system. The booklet considers the nature and extent of local government involvement in schooling in relation to management and policy-making; finance of education; provision of school buildings; staff provisions, such as teacher recruitment, deployment, appraisal, promotion, and training; curriculum planning, development, and implementation; and monitoring and evaluation. After each case study, some general points concerning trends in local government provision of schooling and some reasons for these trends are suggested, followed by a discussion of the equity and efficiency of these provisions. The findings reveal that the historical, political, and economic circumstances of each country accounted for the differences as well as similarities in the nature and extent of local government provisions. The article outlines some issues and questions that could inform future research on schooling in South Africa. (Contains 21 references.) (RJM)

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THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE PROVISION OF SCHOOLING

Experiences from Four Developing Countries

By Leon Tikly

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Education Policy Unit
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THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE PROVISION OF SCHOOLING

Experiences from Four Developing Countries

by Leon Tikly*

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INTRODUCTION

The process of reorganising and transforming South African education is well under way. New structures are being established at the national, provincial, regional, local and institutional levels which will form the basis of a new unified system. One aspect that has not been fully discussed however, is the possible future role of local government in the governance and finance of schooling. Part of any such discussion must necessarily take on board the experiences of other countries with similar histories and problems to South Africa.

This paper will provide a comparative account of the changing role of local government in educational provision in developing countries. It will start by looking at the role of local government in four countries, Zimbabwe, Chile, India and Tanzania. The case studies have been chosen to represent a range of low and middle income countries as classified in the World Development Report (World Bank, 1990).

Like South Africa, each case study country has been faced with problems of financial austerity, especially since the 1980s, which has effected the delivery of services such as education by local government. In each case there have also been growing inequalities, especially between urban and rural areas.

All the case study countries have attempted to use local government as a source of additional revenue for schooling and as a mechanism for introducing greater equality and democracy into the schooling system. This has been especially important because, like South Africa, each of the case study countries has emerged at

some point in the second half of the century from authoritarian and undemocratic systems of government.

The nature and extent of local government involvement in schooling in each country will be considered in relation to the following broad aspects: management and policy-making; finance of education; provision of school buildings; staff provision (e.g. teacher recruitment, deployment, appraisal, promotion and training); curriculum planning, development and implementation; and monitoring and evaluation.

Following the case studies, some general points will be made concerning trends in local government provision of schooling and some reasons for these trends will be suggested. This will be followed by a discussion of the equity and efficiency of local government provision. The article will conclude with some issues and questions thrown up by the case studies that could usefully inform future research into local government provision of schooling in South Africa.

THE CASE STUDIES

1. Zimbabwe

History and background of local government involvement in education

After independence Zimbabwe in effect inherited three systems of local government. Municipal, City and Town Councils together made up an urban system; District Councils were responsible for promoting development in districts formally known as communal areas where the majority of Africans lived; and Rural Councils were responsible for the large commercial farming and mining areas owned almost invariably by whites with Africans as labourers. Since the Rural District Council Act of 1988 however, Rural and District Councils have been consolidated into a common system of Rural District Councils (Rukanda and Chikombah, 1996; Pasteur, 1991).

Local governance of education did exist in Zimbabwe prior to independence, albeit along racist lines. The District Commissioner was responsible for the provision and management of all schools for Africans except mission schools and local government was responsible for white, Indian and 'coloured' education.

After independence the District Councils maintained responsibility for the provision of education but staff provision functions were gradually centralised to the Unified Teaching Service and later the Public Service in 1987. Responsibility for education for Africans in non-communal areas lay with other

relevant local authorities, e.g. the Church, individual farmers or a trust.

Nature and extent of local government involvement in education

In Zimbabwe there are two broad categories of school: government and non-government. The majority are non-governmental and of these (including 90% of all primary schools) most are owned by Rural District Councils or by urban councils. Central government is responsible for basic policy concerning the organisation, governance and finance of both types of schools as well as the curriculum.

Many of these functions, together with the recruitment of staff, are devolved however, to regional and district education officers. District boundaries generally coincide with local government boundaries and regional and district education officers often share local government offices. District education officers also have representation on organs of local government like the influential District Development Committees. They remain accountable, however, to the permanent secretary within the Ministry of Education.

It is with respect to the financing of schools that the difference between government and non-government schools is most marked. The central government basically takes responsibility for all capital, recurrent and building costs in government schools. Local government has the responsibility of providing furniture and other equipment, buying textbooks, paying salaries of all non-teaching staff, maintaining buildings and covering running costs in all non-government schools under their control.

The central government pays teachers salaries and a per capita grant to local government to cover the cost of learning materials although the level of support is considered inadequate (Pasteur, 1991). Non-governmental secondary schools receive an additional building grant from central government (which covers roughly 5% of the total cost of building). Since 1991 all government and non-government primary schools have started to charge fees which are used by the central government to offset salary costs.

In 1987, local government was charged with building and equipping new primary schools. They have also been made responsible for their operation and maintenance (administration, buildings and grounds). The central government continues to exercise professional control over the curriculum etc. through regional and district education officers.

It also continues to run all primary schools built before 1987. The intention however, is to transfer financial and administrative (i.e. non-educational) responsibility for all primary schools to local government. This, together with the reintroduction of user fees, can be understood as an aspect of financial decentralisation in Zimbabwe in the context of structural adjustment policies. The central government has subsequently converted some government primary schools into government secondary schools (Pasteur, 1991).

The costs of schooling are born by the local authorities as follows. In municipal areas parents (or ratepayers in some cases) contribute towards a building fund for new schools. There is also an educational levy charged which is used for other capital and recurrent expenditures. Central government has also allowed councils to raise more money for education through rates and other local taxes such as the tax on the sale of liquor.

In municipalities such as Bulawayo, the assumption of local government responsibility for schooling has resulted in an overall expansion of the number of primary schools to keep up with rising enrolments. Four secondary schools have also been built by the municipality. It would appear however, that municipal councils may be being overstretched with respect to schooling (Pasteur, 1991) with negative consequences for quality of provision.

In rural areas, where 75% of Zimbabwe's population lives, the situation is much worse. Rural district councils are generally without the financial resources to build and operate schools in the way that their urban counterparts can. Subsequently, the tradition of rural communities funding and building their schools themselves has been maintained.

This has put an enormous strain on local communities, especially in the last few drought-ridden years (Maranvanyika, 1995). The quality of rural schools is lower than their urban counterparts. Relatively high administrative costs, together with corruption and mismanagement of central government grants by rural district councils, has made the situation worse and has prompted central government to devolve financial responsibility for community financing of schools to School Development Councils.

The devolution of financial responsibility has not been complemented by any significant devolution of decision-making power to the local authority level. Although educational development is included as one of the activities of District Development Committees, decision-making power over professional matters remains highly centralised. Some commentators have also pointed to the problems of co-ordinating educational development given the dual nature of control over the provision of schooling.

2. Chile

History and background of local government involvement in education

In Chile, local government is made up of over 300 municipalities with each municipality comprising both rural and urban areas. Up until 1980, responsibility for education in Chile was highly centralised within the national Ministry of Education. Espinola Hoffman (1996) has described two phases of decentralisation. The first, which took place during the rule of the military *junta* (1973-1989), was concerned with *financial* decentralisation.

During this period private schools were encouraged within a previously homogenous state sector and much of the financial responsibility for state schools was devolved to the municipalities. The second phase of *pedagogic* decentralisation (1990-1996) involved policies focused on improving educational quality through an emphasis on processes and outputs and on teacher's pay and conditions. It has included several programmes funded by the World Bank. Municipalities have taken a lesser role in this phase.

Importantly, the advent of democracy in Chile has once again made mayors of municipalities directly electable by the people (under the *junta*, mayors were appointed by the president). This has meant that municipal education has become potentially more accountable to the community. Following the election of the democratic central government there were calls from many teachers and educators to return to the old centralised system. The new government has persevered with decentralisation policies however, believing them to be both more efficient and equitable.

Nature and extent of local government involvement in education

Municipalities have been chiefly involved in the finance and administration of primary and secondary schooling as well as pre-school, adult, secondary technical and special education. Responsibility for establishing education policies, developing curriculum frameworks and monitoring norms and standards lies with the national Ministry. Policies, norms and frameworks are implemented by regional secretaries and provincial departments who work directly with the schools (Rodriguez, 1995).

Unlike Zimbabwe, municipalities are responsible for recruiting teachers in terms of a nationally agreed *Teacher's Statute* adopted in 1991. The Department of Education provides municipalities with the funds to cover teacher salaries in municipal and private schools as well as an enrolment-driven per capita subsidy. Increasingly however, municipalities have been encouraged to contribute towards schooling costs from their own tax base.

In order to facilitate this shift, moves are currently underway to allow municipalities to increase their revenue from vehicle permits and property taxes. At present municipalities contribute roughly 10% of the costs of schooling (Thomas and Bullock, 1996). Since 1993 private primary and secondary schools as well as municipal secondary schools have been allowed to set fees (municipal primary schools have been exempt from this). Municipalities also receive a grant from the Ministry of the Interior for the building of new schools and limited funding from the Ministry of Planning for drugs education and job training programmes.

Various attempts have been made to use the municipalities as a means for redressing educational inequalities. Building grants for example, are targeted at those municipalities who can demonstrate a low quality of infrastructure. Municipalities are also required to pay into a Common Municipal Fund which is used to subsidise municipalities with lower per capita incomes. This is being seen as one mechanism (together with other specific Ministry of education projects) for reducing the gap between the quality of rural and urban schools.

Despite overall increases in the resources allocated to municipal schools, they continue to lag behind their private counterparts in terms of the efficiency with which they utilise resources, with negative implications for educational quality. This is despite the fact that per pupil spending on municipal schools increased by 31.4% between 1990 and 1993 compared to only a 19.3% increase in subsidised private schools. Espinola Hoffman has advanced several possible reasons for this.

Firstly, there has been a significant increase in teacher numbers in municipal schools compared with their private counterparts associated with the Teacher's Statute, more secure employment and better pay. This oversupply of teachers has put a large burden on municipal budgets with no corresponding increase in educational quality. Espinola Hoffman also associates teacher oversupply with the advent of democracy at the municipal level and with pressure on elected mayors to employ more personnel.

Secondly, it is argued that the municipalities are overly centralised and bureaucratic in operation. One consequence of this centralisation is that the municipalities rather than the schools themselves are primarily responsible for financial management. This means that the impact of fluctuations in enrolments and

hence levels of state funding for municipal schools, is felt most at the level of the municipal administration and 'there are no immediate consequences to the very inefficient management that can be observed in many municipal schools' (Espinola, 1996:121). Further, inefficiency at the municipal level is exacerbated by a lack of management expertise.

Finally, despite the fact that municipalities are formally accountable to the community, there has been little effort to actively include the community in educational decision-making.

It should be noted in relation to Espinola's critique of municipal schools, that she does not advocate that the level of involvement of municipalities in schooling should be reduced. Rather, she has focused her arguments on the need for greater efficiency measures and incentives at the level of the school and for policies to address the inefficient use of teachers in these schools. Examples here include a greater say for municipalities and private schools over the pay and conditions of teachers they employ, linking pay to efficiency, early retirement, retraining and redeployment in areas of need within the system.

3. India

History and background of local government involvement in education

India is a federal republic comprising 25 states and 7 union territories. Each state is further sub-divided into divisions, districts, blocks and villages. Districts are the most important unit of administration and of local governance. There are 496 districts in the country. India is continental in scale, with the world's second largest population base (about 8.5 million people). Modern local government in India was introduced under British rule and dates back to the mid-nineteenth century. The chief motives for its introduction appear to have been the administrative problems associated with such a large country and the paucity of finances (Dutta, 1992).

In urban areas a variety of organs of local self government have evolved. The most important of these are the city corporations (for cities over 300,000 population) and municipalities (Dutta, 1992). Both of these types of municipal authorities had responsibility for providing education but much of this responsibility was centralised to the state level following independence.

In rural areas the traditional system of *Panchayati Raj* (village and local councils) was reintroduced by the national government after independence as a three tier organ of local government, although with limited success (Webster, 1990). Elected village councils (representing one or several villages) and small town councils send representatives to block and district councils. In some states such as Rajastan West Bengal, Kerala and Karnataka, the *Panchayati* system has been actively encouraged to take a

leading role in development planning, including education (Ahmed, 1991; Singh, 1996), although their role remains subordinate, as elsewhere, to the Departmental officials.

Nature and Extent of Local Government involvement in education

Given both the size and federal structure of India, there is inevitable variation between states as to the role of local government in the provision of education.[1] In terms of the Indian constitution, education is a concurrent responsibility of the national and state governments (as in the case of South Africa). In reality it is primarily a state (i.e. provincial) concern (Bordia, 1995).

The state-level administration lays down policy and regulates the system. Implementation of policy is generally carried out at the district level by education officers and their deputies. Since the 1996 *National Policy on Education*, there has been an effort to decentralise educational management to the block level (which generally covers about 50 schools). In rural areas, Village Education Committees have also become involved in aspects of educational management such as micro-planning and school mapping exercises.

In urban areas politically appointed school boards manage municipal schools. Through these structures members are

[1] This case study is based on Batley's (1992) study of urban local government in the state of Gujarat, Webster's (1990) study of rural local government in the state of West Bengal and Reddy's (1992) study of Panchayati Raj in Andhra Pradesh. In many respects however, it would appear that practices within these states are fairly typical of the country as a whole.

accountable to the relevant elected authority, although they also contain representatives of the state education department. These boards appoint teachers, provide equipment and build and maintain schools. Municipalities are responsible for the majority of primary and pre-primary schools, along with some secondary and, in the case of some authorities, even of tertiary institutions.[2] The private sector has provided an increasing number of primary schools. The vast majority of secondary schools are provided either by the state or the private sector.

Sixty per cent of funding for schools in urban areas comes from the state, with the rest coming from general municipal sources. The state government pays municipal governments between 75% and 85% of their 'admissible' expenditure on education. The exact proportion depends on the municipality's performance in recovering an education 'cess' or levy on behalf of the state. The cess is levied as a percentage of property rates. The municipal government also receives 50% of the education cess collected by it on behalf of the state government during the previous year as grant for the maintenance and repair of primary school buildings.

In most rural areas there are no School Boards and the district administration is responsible for improving and erecting school buildings. This is despite the political will to involve the *Panchayati Raj* system more closely in areas such as education. Districts have some responsibility for mobilising community contributions as well as those from district development departments. The general policy is that if the district can raise 25% of building costs for a school, then the state will contribute the remainder.

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2 The Ahmedabad City Corporation boasts a medical school, for example.

Several important points emerge from the Indian case study. Firstly, linking state grants to the *efficiency* of local government fund-raising has had contradictory effects. On the one hand it has led to a shortage of school buildings and hence overcrowding. On the other hand, it has encouraged a concern with efficiency on the part of district and municipal authorities. Most schools for example, employ the double-shift system. Schools also employ a bare minimum of administrative personnel, although this is also related to the lack of any meaningful resources to manage (Batley, 1992).

Secondly, like their counterparts in Chile, municipal schools generally perform worse than private schools, despite a higher level of per capita expenditure and smaller pupil:teacher ratios. In the Indian case at least, this can be attributed to the drainage of middle class children to the private sector and to the predominance of poorly qualified but relatively highly paid teachers in municipal schools (Batley, 1992).

Thirdly, the absence of enabling legislation has hampered the development of School Boards or similar structures in rural areas. This is despite the potentially important role that elected and politically accountable organs of local government could play in encouraging popular participation in educational management (Ahmed, 1991). Ahmed also argues that central government could enable local government structures to raise more money through land taxes, thereby exploiting the relative affluence of land owners for the benefit of the rural poor. Such a scheme would also help to address the disparities in funding and quality of schooling between rural and urban areas.

Related to the above point is the view expressed in some of the literature (Batley, 1992) that education tends to 'fall between two

stools', i.e. that largely because of the onerous financial responsibility associated with schooling, as well as a certain ambiguity surrounding the question of responsibility, there is often a reluctance on the part of local government to embark on fresh initiatives or expand existing provision.

4. Tanzania

History and background of local government involvement in education

In Tanzania (as in all of the case studies so far) there was a form of traditional local government in the tribal system that pre-dated colonial times. The first colonial form of local government was introduced under the German administration at the end of the nineteenth century. These fledgling local structures had no responsibility for education, however.

The English continued a system of local administration when they became the colonial power in Tanganyika after the First World War. Education however, was left largely in the hands of the missionaries.[3] During the last eight years of British rule a system of democratically elected district and town councils was introduced that continued after independence in 1961. These structures had responsibility for financing and implementing education policy under the guidance of the Ministry of Education.

By the early 1970s however, these councils had become financially unviable and administratively weak and were abolished. Their administrative duties, including those over education, were largely taken over by the national ministries and departments through decentralised structures. District Education Officers were appointed by the national ministry. Although formally accountable to District Development Committees (and

[3] The only exception was the establishment of a local government school at Mzumbe near Morogoro which was supposed to supply training for native local officials and to which native local authorities were required to contribute.

the system of *Ujaama* villages they represented) they remained effectively accountable to the Minister on most areas of educational policy.

By 1978, the government had reneged on its policies and reintroduced urban local government in the form of township, town, municipal and city councils (depending on population). These structures were given back tax-raising powers and some responsibility for promoting educational (and other) development, mainly through whatever financial contribution they could make.

By 1984 a whole new system of urban and rural government had been reintroduced to 'enhance democracy and the policy of self-reliance'. There were also clear financial incentives for the government, as it was hoped that the new district and urban councils could mobilise substantial community contributions for services such as education.

Nature and extent of local government involvement in education

In reality, rural and urban councils in Tanzania continue to have very limited responsibility for schooling. Basically, they serve as conduits for central government funds (Therkildsen, 1993) with real power and responsibility for almost all areas of policy residing with central government. Further, districts have been unable to mobilise meaningful resources for education, despite their powers to levy a Universal Primary Education (UPE) contribution from parents.

Indeed, it would appear that parents are much more willing to contribute directly to schools in their immediate area rather than

through the council, although where councils have proved efficient at re-allocating UPE funds to local schools, parents have been more willing to contribute. Parents also have a more direct say in school management through village councils, although here again, these structures have no real decision-making powers.

The lack of popular interest in district councils as controllers of education is reinforced by the general apathy of councils themselves, at least towards primary education. Primary education only really becomes an issue for local politicians when the budget is being set or when an election is imminent (Therkildsen, 1993). Even those areas where councils do have formal influence, for example the allocation of teachers and resources within the district, are left to the district bureaucrats.

More interest is shown in the situation of donor funded developmental projects and in secondary education. Political struggles at local level often revolve around the equitable allocation of donor funds within a district.

There is also a good deal of interest in secondary education, still a relatively scarce commodity in Tanzania. Ironically, district councils have even less powers over secondary education than they do over primary and are not legally permitted to run such schools. As central government has proved more and more incapable of providing secondary schools however, many councils have established trust funds which are used to set up private secondary schools.

Of some significance here is the observation that districts have been relatively successful at mobilising community resources for building secondary schools, an undertaking that is beyond the scope of individual villages. The sporadic nature in which this has

happened however, has had negative implications for equity, with some districts attracting more private funding for secondary education than others. This may not have been the case if districts had been formally entrusted and funded to run secondary schools.

Further, districts have proved inefficient in responding to changing patterns of demand which are themselves related to the uneven spread of secondary education. Pupils have tended to migrate to areas (sometimes in neighbouring districts) from which there is a greater chance of gaining admittance to secondary school (i.e. in wealthier areas). Primary enrolments have also tended to drop off in less well-off areas as school fees were reimposed during the 1980s.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION OF CASE STUDIES

This section draws together and analyses some of the main findings from the case studies. Firstly, explanations are offered about the changing role of local government in the provision of schooling. This is followed by a discussion of some of the strengths and weaknesses in relation to equity and efficiency concerns. Finally, the discussion turns to a brief consideration of how the case studies can illuminate future research into local government provision of schooling in South Africa.

Explaining the changing role of local government in the provision of schooling

Two main trends emerge from the case studies concerning the changing role of local government in the provision of schooling during the 1980s and 1990s.[4] On the one hand there has not been any increase in local government *control* over educational matters including overall policy making, curriculum design and implementation, evaluation and monitoring. Indeed. if anything, control over educational matters has become more centralised within the education departments and ministries themselves.

[4] Drawing general conclusions from a limited sample of case studies is always problematic. The discussion below will have to be corroborated by further research in other developing countries. It is interesting to note however, a high degree of convergence in these geographically disparant case studies in terms of general trends. These trends are confirmed in some of the more general literature (see for example Bahl and Linn, 1992).

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On the other hand, it would appear that local government responsibility for the *financing and provision* of schooling has increased. Local governments have also been used as conduits for central government funds and have been given some responsibility for distributing human and material resources within their boundaries. How can these countervailing tendencies be explained?

One way of understanding the continuing lack of control exercised by local governments over professional aspects of education is through an appreciation of the historical legacy of each case study. As Lauglo (1996) has argued, many developing countries have a long tradition of 'bureaucratic centralism'.

Under colonialism, centralisation of the state's responsibilities served both as a means of control and as a means of 'developing' the colonised; many post-independence countries subsequently maintained centralised control in order to promote nation building and central planning. This has especially been the case where regional and local government infrastructure has been weak. Lauglo's analysis is helpful in explaining the history of educational governance in Zimbabwe, Tanzania and India. Education in Chile too, was highly centralised before the military *junta*.

From the beginning of the 1980s however, there have been growing pressures to decentralise different aspects of education for a variety of reasons, with implications for local government. One such reason has been the 'liberalisation' of political life, exemplified by new commitments on the part of governments to multi-party democracy. This has been the situation in all of the case study countries and has provided a political rationale for a new and more prominent role for democratic local government.

Decentralisation of decision-making power has however, often proved more rhetorical than real. As Lauglo has argued, there has been a tendency for bureaucratic establishments to protect their power and not to cede control to their opponents or to groups they do not trust. In this respect, local governments have been seen as both potential centres of political opposition to central elites and unreliable agents in the delivery of basic services such as education.

The decentralisation that has occurred then, has generally been within the education system itself with the strengthening of district and institutional management structures. This trend has been encouraged by organisations such as the World Bank (World Bank, 1995). New projects in India and Chile aimed at quality improvement have bypassed local government and have been directed at either the schools themselves or school blocks (in the case of India).

With respect to educational issues, the role of local governments in the case studies was limited to representation on school boards or committees, or for district education officials to be partly accountable to organs of local government such as district development committees. In both cases however, it is the educational bureaucrats, answerable to their superiors within the education department, who wield the real power.

Of crucial importance in terms of explaining the increase in financial responsibilities of local government in relation to schooling, has been the growing impact of economic crisis and structural adjustment policies on educational reform (Samoff, 1994).

In this context financial decentralisation in education has been encouraged by organisations such as the World Bank as a means of promoting efficiency and effectiveness in education (see Tilak, 1995 and World Bank, 1995). In this context, governments have sought ways to shift financial responsibility for education to communities, either by promoting community financing of state schools or through the encouragement of private schools.

With respect to financial decentralisation, the involvement of local governments in the provision of schooling has often been considered a potentially useful way of mobilising additional community resources. This was the situation in all of the case study countries during the 1980s (the only exception being rural India).

Subsequently, however, there appears to have been a growing disenchantment with the efficiency of local government bureaucracies in handling community funds for education and, as the Zimbabwean and Tanzanian case studies exemplify, there has been a trend towards bypassing local government and encouraging communities to contribute directly to the school. This has been most pronounced in rural areas.

Likewise, some urban local authorities in Zimbabwe and India for example, have been unenthusiastic about assuming responsibility for the provision of schooling on the grounds of an insufficient tax base and a lack of any real decision-making power. In some countries, local governments have directly facilitated the growth of private schools, either by providing subsidies (Chile), or through the establishment of trust funds (Tanzania).

Greater local government involvement in the financing of schooling can also be seen as an attempt to improve equity in

school finance. Firstly, allowing richer citizens to contribute more through taxation has been used in all the case study countries as a means to provide education for all within district boundaries and the expansion of local authority provision in rural India has been argued for this reason (Ahmed, 1991).

Using local governments as a conduit for central government funds for education has also provided the opportunity in Chile for poorer, often rural, municipalities to be targeted for additional resources. Chile is also an example of a country where wealthier local governments contribute collectively towards the provision of services in less wealthy ones.

Local Government Provision of Schooling in Relation to Equity and Efficiency

How equitable and efficient have local governments been in their roles as providers of schooling in developing countries? Firstly, with regard to efficiency, the picture to emerge from the case studies is an uneven one, with variations within and between countries, particularly with respect to urban/rural distinctions. Variations in efficiency of performance can be related to the following broad characteristics:

- The *strength of the local tax base* and the *efficiency of tax collection*. With the exception of Chile and urban councils in Zimbabwe, a weak tax base accompanied by a poor track record of tax collection, seriously circumscribed the ability of local government to finance schooling. In rural Zimbabwe and India this has led to reduced involvement of local government in finance. In urban Zimbabwe and Chile on the other hand, the

devolution of financial responsibility has been accompanied by additional tax-raising powers.

- *Management capacity* within local government. Here management capacity refers to both the level of training and expertise of local government employees and the general efficiency of local government structures. Once again there appeared to be a great discrepancy between urban and rural areas and this was a consistent stumbling block to further local government involvement in all the case studies.

- The *efficiency with which local governments distribute resources*. In some cases, again most notably in rural areas, political pressure from dominant groups and even corruption have influenced the allocation of resources (also with negative implications for equity).

- Inefficiency in resource allocation has a reciprocal relationship with *levels of public involvement and interest* in local government provision of schooling In Tanzania and Chile, inefficiency of resource allocation, the hegemony of dominant groups and the existence of corruption can be related to lack of popular participation (and hence accountability of public officials). By the same token, as the Tanzanian study shows, where district councils have demonstrated their efficiency, communities have been more willing to contribute to local government funds.

- The *funding mechanisms used to allocate resources from central government*. In all cases some kind of per capita system was used which encourages local governments to ensure high enrolments in local government schools. Espinola Hoffman (1996) has argued that in the case of Chile however, this type of funding does not in itself necessarily lead to greater

efficiency. Rather, she argues, greater responsibility and accountability for financial management should be devolved to the school level if individual schools (and hence the system as a whole) are to become more efficient.

In India, central government grants to urban local governments have also been tied to the efficiency with which local taxes have been raised. This has certainly led to greater efficiency in the management of resources by local government but has also been blamed as a contributing factor to the under-provision of resources in municipal schools.

- The *clarity with which the respective roles of national, provincial and district education departments and of local government are defined in relation to educational provision.* This point came across most strongly in the Indian and Tanzanian case studies. There is a need for a clear legislative and regulatory framework that defines the nature and extent of power and responsibility over schooling between levels and tiers of government if confusion and ambiguity are to be avoided. Carefully allocating powers and responsibilities also provides a necessary pre-requisite for greater public accountability as it becomes less easy for one organ of the state to pass the buck for a particular responsibility to another.

- Finally, it has been observed in two of the case studies, Chile and India, that *local government run schools are less efficient than their private counterparts,* despite higher per capita expenditure and lower pupil:teacher ratios. This has to be seen however, in relation to the fact that private schools have tended to attract middle class children while municipal schools retain a higher proportion of children from socially and educationally deprived backgrounds.

Private schools, as we have seen in both Chile and India, have not been subject to the same tight regulations regarding teacher recruitment and remuneration and have therefore been able to save money. In Tanzania, the existence of private schools has also had a major impact on the efficiency and equity of local government provision, particularly with respect to teacher deployment and resource allocation. Another way of interpreting the relative efficiency of private and local government schools then, is to understand the processes of privatisation and deregulation themselves as having negative implications for efficiency within the system as a whole.

The following points can be made with regard to variations in the equity of local government provision.

- There were *variations in the nature of the taxes and levies used by local governments to fund education* with implications for equity. All urban governments and some rural governments used some form of property or land tax which (however crudely) does link level of taxation to ability to pay. In this way richer members of the community effectively subsidised the less well-off.

  In India, an additional education 'cess' was raised but this too was taken as a percentage of property tax. In many districts of Tanzania contributions to 'education for all' funds are linked to earnings. Other forms of taxation such as taxes on liquor and car licensing also tend to favour the least well-off who cannot afford these luxury commodities. In Zimbabwe, India and some parts of Tanzania however, a flat educational levy was charged which, although easier to administer, puts an equal burden on all citizens regardless of their ability to pay.

- Countries also varied in the extent to which *funding mechanisms aimed at redressing inequalities* between localities were adopted.

CONCLUSION

As noted in the introduction there has been little research to date on the possible role of local government in the provision of schooling in South Africa. Each of the case study countries has revealed differences as well as similarities in the nature and extent of local government provision depending on the historical, political and economic circumstances of each country. The formulation of policy for South Africa then needs to rest on indigenous research. It is hoped however, that the case studies throw up a range of issues and questions that might usefully inform such research.

Firstly, there is a need to analyse the historical legacy of local government involvement in South African education. In important respects, local government provision in each of the case countries has been influenced by previous arrangements. This is likely to be difficult given the fragmented system inherited from the apartheid era (the situation in urban 'white' areas for example, is likely to be very different to the situation pertaining to areas governed by traditional authorities).

Secondly, a study of the legal and political context needs to be made. This might include an account of constitutional provision concerning local government involvement in education and of the views of various stakeholders. The case studies demonstrate the need for clarity concerning the respective roles of central and local government with respect to schooling and the importance of popular participation in local government decision-making.

Thirdly, a financial analysis of the strength of the local tax base and the efficiency and equity of tax collection would have to be

made in order to assess the feasibility of increasing local government financial contributions to schooling. Raising existing taxes or introducing new ones would have to be considered.

Fourthly, management capacity in local government would have to be studied carefully, particularly with respect to capacity in professional (educational) matters and in financial management. Fifthly, if some responsibility for local government financial provision were considered desirable then appropriate mechanisms for equitably channelling money from provincial to local governments and from local governments to schools would have to be investigated.

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